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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Letter dated 28 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the Joint Russia-European Union Statement on the Situation in North Africa and the Middle East, of 24 February 2011 (see annex).

As agreed with the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, I would like to request your kind assistance in having the present letter and the Statement circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 28 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Joint Russia-European Union Statement on the Situation in North Africa and the Middle East

24 February 2011

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy share concern over developments in a number of countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

Reaffirming the positions set forth by Moscow and Brussels in recent days, as well as expressing support for the statement by the Council of the Arab League and the Security Council press statement issued on 22 February 2011, the Minister and the High Representative declare the following.

We condemn and consider unacceptable the use of military force to break up peaceful demonstrations, as well as any other manifestations of violence, and insist on an immediate cessation of such actions. In particular, we strongly condemn the violence and the use of force against civilians in Libya, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people. We express deep regret and condolences for the loss of human lives. We urge all parties involved to show responsibility, respect human rights and international humanitarian law, and ensure the safety of civilians and foreign nationals.

Massive protests expose a range of problems that have accumulated within societies. These problems should be addressed by the peoples of the relevant countries through national dialogue involving all political forces and society strata aimed at reaching public consensus regarding the ways out of the crisis and conducting the much-needed transformations. Democratization processes should evolve in peaceful forms and within a legal framework.

Supporting the peoples of Arab countries in their aspirations for a more just and prosperous life, Russia and the European Union stand ready to provide economic and other assistance to interested countries at their request.

The Minister and the High Representative stress in particular that current upheavals in countries of the region should not be used as a pretext for preserving an impasse in the efforts to establish comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. On the contrary, these efforts should be intensified. The achievement of a just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a crucially important component of the efforts aimed at stabilization and sustainable development of the region as a whole. As members of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, the European Union and Russia will seek, at its ministerial meeting in Paris in mid-March, the adoption of effective decisions encouraging the parties to resume Palestinian-Israeli dialogue and opening the way to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East within the existing international legal framework without any attempts to prejudge the final status issues through unilateral actions, first of all through settlement activities.

The Minister and the High Representative reaffirm their support for the efforts to re-establish Palestinian unity on the basis of principles enshrined in the Arab Peace Initiative.